



Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of the Chief of Staff

July 15, 2008

The Honorable Sam Reed  
Secretary of State of Washington  
Legislative Building, 2nd Floor  
P.O. Box 40220  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Mr. Secretary:

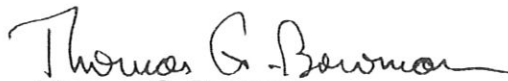
On May 5, 2008, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) issued directive 2008-025, "Voting Assistance for VA Patients," a copy of which is enclosed. The policy is the result of careful deliberation and consideration for the needs and rights of our patients, concerns about disrupting facility operations, and the need to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is not involved in partisan political activities. It requires each facility to establish written policies and procedures and to post information on voter registration and voting assistance provided by the VA Medical Center. In addition, it engages VA volunteers to provide assistance to our veteran patients or residents of our community living centers and domiciliaries if they wish to register or exercise their right to vote.

Although VHA directive 2008-025 does not authorize outside organizations to conduct voter registration drives at VA facilities, it permits outside entities or individuals to assist VA with voter registration or voting efforts in support of our veteran patients or residents of our community living centers and domiciliaries when the respective medical center determines such support is needed. To ensure that VA offers these veterans voter registration and voting assistance in a nonpartisan manner and with minimal disruptions to facility operations, we believe it is essential that these efforts be coordinated through the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) office at each VA medical center.

We recognize that state and local government election offices are experts in the voting process and we welcome your assistance. VA will be directing each of our Voluntary Service Officers to contact your office for voting and educational materials that you deem appropriate to assist or inform veterans in regards to voting. We appreciate your assistance in gathering and providing these materials for our veterans. Enclosed, is the contact information for each VAVS office in your state to help facilitate this process. If you have questions, please contact these VAVS offices. A similar letter has been sent to each of the Secretaries of State or chief election officials.

VA is committed to assisting our veteran patients or residents of our community living centers and domiciliaries who request assistance with voter registration and voting. We look forward to working with you to best serve these veterans.

Sincerely yours,

  
Thomas G. Bowman  
Chief of Staff

Enclosures

RECEIVED  
JUL 20 2008

Office of Secretary of State

May 5, 2008

## VOTING ASSISTANCE FOR VA PATIENTS

1. **PURPOSE:** This Veteran Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines the policy for assisting patients who seek information on voter registration and voting.
2. **BACKGROUND:** VHA is committed to assisting veterans exercise their Constitutional right to vote; longstanding Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy ensures patients' assistance and the opportunity to exercise their voting privilege. The right to register and vote is one of the explicit rights set forth in the VA patients' rights regulation at Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 17.33. Pursuant to this regulation, information about these rights, including the right to vote, is posted at each nursing station, and each patient is provided a copy when they are admitted to a VA facility. This policy establishes a uniform approach to assembling and providing information on voter registration and voting to veterans who request it.
3. **POLICY:** It is VHA policy to assist patients who seek to exercise their right to register and vote; however, due to Hatch Act (Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) §§ 7321-7326) requirements and to avoid disruptions to facility operations, voter registration drives are not permitted.
4. **ACTION**
  - a. Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors, and facility Directors are responsible for ensuring that each facility has a policy that addresses assistance to VA patients who seek to exercise their right to register and vote.
  - b. Each facility Director must ensure:
    - (1) There is a written published policy on voter assistance that addresses the following:
      - (a) Patients are granted authorized absence for such periods of time as are necessary to register and to vote, subject to the opinions of their healthcare providers.
      - (b) If patients are unable to leave the facility, assistance is provided for registering and for voting by absentee ballot.
      - (c) Information on the voting assistance program is posted on inpatient wards, domiciliaries, and nursing homes.
    - (2) The facility Voluntary Service Officer, or designee is responsible for:

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES MAY 31, 2013

## VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-025

May 5, 2008

(a) Informing all inpatients or residents of the opportunity to receive voting assistance information. *NOTE: This also needs to be done when the patient is admitted to the facility.*

(b) Ensuring all VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) personnel (including volunteers), prior to providing any information or assistance to VA patients who seek to register to vote or vote, annually review and sign the attached "Political Activities Fact Sheet and Certification," (VA Form 10-0462) and maintain the completed form in the volunteer's file .

(c) Obtaining and maintaining all materials used to assist with voter registration and voting.

1. As the requirements and procedures for absentee voting vary widely by state and because there is currently no single form that allows a voter in the United States to request an absentee ballot from any and all states, VAWS offices at each facility need access to timely and accurate state voting information.

2. Non-partisan voter resources include the following:

a. National Voter Registration Form is available at:

<http://www.eac.gov/voter/Register%20to%20Vote> and <http://www.fabnit.com/nvra-update-09-12-06.pdf>),

b. Information is also available at:

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Voting/Register.shtml> and [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov).

c. Local, county Government voter registrars.

(3) Any request by an outside organization to facilitate voter registration on VA property is forwarded to local Regional Counsel for review.

## 5. REFERENCES

a. Title 38 CFR § 17.33.

b. Title 38 CFR § 1.218(a)14.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Office of Volunteer Services (10C2) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to (202) 461-7300.

**7. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 2008-023 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires May 31, 2013.

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP  
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION CO: E-mailed 5/5/08  
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mailed 5/5/08

**ATTACHMENT A**

**VA FORM 10-0462, POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FACT SHEET AND CERTIFICATION**

Below is an embedded copy of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Form 10-0462, Political Activities Fact Sheet and Certification. The fillable version of VA Form 10-0462 can be found on the VA Forms internet website <http://www.va.gov/vaforms> and intranet website <http://vaww.va.gov/vaforms> .



10-0462-fill.pdf



VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) personnel, including volunteers, and any other personnel, who provide information or assistance to VA veteran patients on voter registration must abide by the following rules.

- You **MAY** in response to a request:

- Provide a form or other information to register to vote or to obtain an absentee ballot from the appropriate state.
- Assist in completing and mailing the form to register to vote or obtain an absentee ballot, or in completing the ballot itself.
- Direct a veteran patient to the state or local government office or entity responsible for voter registration, for example, State Secretary of State, State Board of Elections.

- You **MAY NOT**:

- Discuss partisan politics, promote a particular candidate, party or issue, or even express a personal opinion on a candidate, party or issue in response to a question from a patient.
- Wear any partisan political buttons, pins, or ribbons in a VA facility.
- Direct persons to any voter registration being conducted by a non-governmental entity, for example a political party, union or special interest group.
- Except to provide the requested voter registration assistance set forth above, encourage or discourage participation in politics, through activities such as voting, campaigning or fundraising.

**CERTIFICATION: I have read and understand what is and is not permissible in connection with my providing voter registration assistance. I understand that the Hatch Act may place other limitations on my ability to engage in partisan political activities and that the above requirements are not intended as an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts under the Hatch Act. I understand that I should address any questions I have on providing voter registration assistance to the local Regional Counsel.**

PRINT NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)

SIGN

DATE

# *Veterans Health Administration Facilities & Voluntary Service Program Managers*

## WASHINGTON

<i>City/Facility</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>Telephone #</i>
<i>American Lake (Tacoma, WA) - VA Puget</i>	Jeffrey	Honeycutt	(253) 582-8440
<i>Seattle - VA Puget Sound HCS</i>	Jeffrey	Honeycutt	(206) 764-2195
<i>Spokane (WA) VA Medical Center</i>	Carla	Lippert	(509) 434-7500
<i>Vancouver (WA) Division</i>	Jacalyn	Hardy	(360) 690-1842
<i>Walla Walla (WA) - Jonathan M.</i>	Larry	Werst	(509) 527-3458